

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Monthly Report -- Bangkok Bureau

FROM:

EXTENSION

NO.

Chief, Operations Group

DATE

November 1988

STAT

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

1.

C/Ops

11 Jan

B. J. S.

2.

3.

C/E&PS

1/13

L

4.

DD/FBIS

13 Jan

B

5.

D/FBIS

Jr

6.

7.

PO/RA

1/17

Om

8.

SA/CD

1/17

ed

9.

10. DC/AS

C/AS

1/23

208

11.

C/B&F/AS

P. W.

12.

13.

14.

C/AG

26 Jan

m. H.

15.

Exec. Reg.

1 December 1988
FBIS-3223-88

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
THROUGH: Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT: Monthly Report -- Bangkok Bureau -- November 1988

I. GENERAL

A. Two natural calamities struck Thailand during the month. The first began 6 November when the evening duty editor called the deputy chief at his home a block away to ask if he had noticed anything unusual as the 16th-floor Bureau penthouse had just shaken violently. The deputy chief said he hadn't noticed a thing, was assured that the editor wasn't smoking anything out of the ordinary, and told him to call the Embassy Marine guard to see if he had noticed anything. The guard hadn't. Less than 5 minutes later, however, the duty editor called again to say that the building was shaking so violently that the ceiling tiles were crackling and that everyone was evacuating. Since no one else had experienced any tremors, it was initially suspected that the construction of a 19-story skyscraper only feet away from the Bureau building had undermined the foundation, but then the Marine guard began receiving frantic calls about the tremors from Embassy hi-rise residents around the city, so everyone went back to work on the assumption that one of Thailand's rare earthquakes had come and gone. It was later learned that there was a major quake on the PRC-Burma border.

B. The second event had much more serious consequences for southern Thailand. Several days of rain triggered heavy flooding, which in turn led to earthslides in hilly regions that had been denuded by illegal logging. The combination of the two resulted in entire villages being inundated by a sea of mud and logs in a matter of minutes, leaving more than 400 dead, scores missing, and millions of dollars in damages. In the meantime, not a drop of rain had fallen in Bangkok.

C. A Washington Post report accusing unnamed Thai military of skimming off 3.5 million dollars in U.S. covert aid meant for the Cambodian noncommunist resistance created a furor among government officials here and kept the Thai section busy for several days processing reaction and editorials. However, the topic quickly lost

its appeal when no reply was forthcoming from the Post to Thai Army Commander in Chief General Chawalit Yongchaiyut's challenge to either produce names or apologize.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

The total publishable wordage for the month reached an all-time high of 911,620, almost 10,000 more than the previous high in December 1986. The new record was a result of the following significant events covered by the various units:

1. Cambodian Unit: The Cambodian Summit 5-7 November in Paris.
2. Indonesia/Burma/Malaysia Unit: The Indonesian foreign minister's visit to Hanoi 17-20 November, and the ongoing events in Burma in the runup to the elections that are supposed to take place sometime after the first of the year.
3. South Asian Unit: CPSU General Secretary Gorbachev's visit to India 18-20 November, the Pakistani general elections won by Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party, the Sri Lankan elections in that country's northeast region, Bangladeshi President Ershad's visit to the PRC, and the attempted coup in the Maldives.
4. Thai/Lao Unit: In Thailand, PRC Prime Minister Li Peng's visit 10-14 November, Thai Prime Minister Chatchai's visit to Laos 24-25 November, Army Commander in Chief General Chawalit's visit to the PRC 22-26 November; and the return of the Narai Bantomsin Lintel to Thailand on 10 November by the Chicago Art Institute. In Laos, the nationwide provincial and municipal elections and the Thai prime minister's visit.
5. Vietnamese Unit: Visits by the Soviet deputy foreign minister and the vice chairman of the Council of Ministers, the Indonesian foreign minister, and the Philippine foreign secretary; the 10th anniversary of the SRV-USSR Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and the 71st anniversary of the October Revolution; the Vietnam Fatherland Front Congress; the Council of State's meeting 9-11 November; and last but not least, the first beauty contest ever held under the Vietnamese socialist regime (no vital statistics were given).

B. Lateral Services

1. BBC expressed "many, many thanks" for the Rangoon Domestic Service phone feeds the Bureau had been providing it almost nightly for several months, but said such feeds would no longer be required effective 4 November. However, evidently those in charge forgot to inform the section directly involved as three more requests

were received within a week before the duty editor thought to ask his BBC counterpart if he had seen the message canceling the service. The voice said he hadn't, but to hold on while he checked it out, and hasn't been heard from since.

Study
like
OIT

3. Requests were also fulfilled for the embassy in Brunei and the local embassy's Political Section and USIS.

4. The first thing every Monday and Tuesday morning the duty editor fulfills urgent requests from the embassy political and economic counselors for the latest football results.

C. Technical

1. Parts are still being awaited from Headquarters for the two satellite dishes struck by lightning 23 September. The Analyst dish remains permanently parked on the 60E satellite while the Operations dish can be moved manually for other coverage and limited cruising until such time as the long-awaited parts are received and installed and the dishes are once again fully operational.

2. A Laser printer was installed in the Admin Section and wired so that the chief, deputy chief, secretary, engineer, and admin personnel have direct access to it.

3. Bang Ping personnel completed the painting of one ROSET dish and are working on the other.

D. Cruising

1. The final frequency adjustments were reported on Moscow International Service.

2. An unscheduled television feed from Pyongyang, North Korea to Berlin, the German Democratic Republic was observed on the 60E Intelsat on 2 November. The feed consisted of a group of foreigners visiting various places in the DPRK.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. IBM Unit Chief [] and Senior Burmese Monitor [] received QSI's for their sign-on to sign-off coverage of the Burma crisis over the past several months at a Bureau ceremony on 30 November.

STAT
STAT

2. On the same occasion, the following individuals received length of service pins:

30 Years

[]

STAT

20 Years



STAT

IV. VISITS

A. To the Bureau

1. Director Bob Manners' 10-16 November visit got off to an auspicious start when he arrived the same day as Thailand's long awaited Narai Banthomsin Lintel. On the work front, he toured the Bureau and Bang Ping, met with Ambassador O'Donohue and chiefs of various Embassy components, and NIA Director General Ataya Paaopanchon. On the recreational side, he gave the Bureau hackers a golf lesson at one of the local courses, awarded prizes to the winners of the tennis and swimming competitions at a day-long office picnic, during which he took to the hot food like a native, and attended a dinner hosted by the bureau chief. The only sour note to the entire visit was his departure, as his flight left 7 hours late, causing him to overnight in Hong Kong rather than arriving in Seoul.

2. Prod Group Linguist  visited the bureau for STAT a tour and briefing on 1 November.

3. Defense Department Analysts Joe Kinder and John Sloan visited the Bureau 17 November to discuss Vietnam with Vietnamese Unit Chief Vinh Dinh Nguyen.

4. TDY State Department Analyst Paula Causey, accompanied by Embassy Political Section member Tom Ferguson, visited 18 November to discuss Indochina with representatives from those units.

B. From the Bureau

1. The chief and deputy chief had lunch with Australian Embassy Second Secretary Tim Mazzarol 17 November to discuss the receipt of the Vietnamese publications and coverage of Vietnam.



Chief, Bangkok Bureau

STAT